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An Interview with Philly Joe Jones [Transcript]

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HOWARD UNIVERSITY JAZZ ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
PHILLY JOE JONES, Drummer
W.A. BROWER, Interviewer
June 10, 1985

Transcription of audio track of video tape recorded in the studio
of WHMM-TV on the campus of Howard University

W. A. BROWER: Philly Joe Jones for the Howard University Jazz
Oral History Project. I want to start off, ah, maybe discussing
how you arrived at becoming a drummer...just to set that up. I
understand that music was a big part of your home life...that the
piano was there. Would you talk a little bit about that musical
environment?...and how you developed early as a musician.

PHILLY JOE JONES: My family is...my grandmother was a pianist.
And, ah, she had seven daughters. My mother was one of her
daughters. And she made all of her daughters play the piano
because she was a pianist. So, in turn, all of my aunts made
their children...I have cousins that...I have one in New York
that teaches...made his debut at Carnegie...teaching piano in New
York now...often. His sisters, brothers...they all know how to
play the piano...classics. My immediate family...I was the only
one in my family that leaned toward music. My brothers and
sisters rebelled. And my mother didn't press them like my aunt
pressed their children, but she used to press me. And I didn't

really want to play the piano because I had heard so much of it with my aunt...because I stayed with my aunt and my cousins a long time and I learned a lot about the piano. But my mind has always been towards the drums. I don't know what it is. It's just the drums that I loved, you know. I used to get suspended when I was in school...for a day for using pencils on the desk. My teacher used to call me in the back of the room, "Jones!" It's just something about drums that facinated me. And ah, my mother saw that at an early age, so she didn't really force me into the piano because she wanted me to do what I felt I wanted to do. So, ah...I just ah, stayed with the drums as much as I could. During my young years as I grew up I used to go into nightclubs and hang around the back window and listen to fine drummers in Philadelphia. I finally asked one of them to help me and...(inaudible) a young drummer in Philly was the greatest drummer in Philadelphia at the time and he took me under his wings, showed me a lot of things and I started developing.

BROWER: So, you didn't take drum lessons per se?

JONES: Oh, yeah. I studied later. I had been playing five

years, professionally, before I started to study drums.

BROWER: So, how did you...when you...you know...we kind of leaped a lot of time, but ah, as a young man when you going around the clubs, you were what fourteen, fifteen, seventeen, eighteen, what was that...?

JONES: Oh, no. I was ah...between thirteen and fifteen because I went in the army when I was sixteen...

BROWER: Did you have a set of drums at that point?

JONES: No.

BROWER: So it was just an ear thing?

JONES: No I (inaudible) playing on anything. I didn't have any drums at that time...no.

BROWER: So did you start playing music before the army, after the army...when did you start?

JONES: When (Inaudible) I came into music after I was ah, discharged. After I was discharged...but see, in the army I used to get a chance to go over to the rec hall and play with the ah...in some rehearsals, (inaudible) with the ah...with the ah, (inaudible) band...when they were playing. They were jamming in

those days and I was just coming along. But I used to go in and sit down and play some with them...the best I could play. But that wasn't my job. I couldn't be in the band. I was a military policeman. So I used to go over there when I had a chance to get away.

BROWER: So you went into the army when you were at sixteen?

JONES: Yeah, seventeen...

BROWER: Why did you do that?

JONES: Well, I put my age up. You had to be seventeen to get in.

BROWER: Why did you do that?

JONES: Well, I came out of school I didn't see anything I wanted to do. I thought maybe...my father...see my stepfather was a career army man and he was a veterinarian in the army. And he taught me all kind of...everything. (Inaudible) on everything...you know, how to march and everything. So, he wanted me to hurry up and get away. Maybe he wanted to get rid of us...three sons...And my stepfather...so we all went...I joined the army and my brothers joined. And we went away. But I

still had music in my mind. But I couldn't go in for the band.

I wasn't that qualified...so...

BROWER: Uh huh, but, so, before you went into the army...made that decision...ah, there were drummers that were teaching you things...

JONES: Drummers that I was listening to. I was listen to...and, ah, showing me a few pointers at that age...a few pointers. I didn't really get with the...with the...really get into it deep with them until I came home. Because I came home I was ah, I was just twenty-one. And it took me a little while to get to them and get some better lesson from them...and I'm an older person. And I got it together pretty good and went to work in Philadelphia.

BROWER: Who were some of...when you came out of the army, who were some of the drummers that you began to interact with...and get some information...?

JONES: When (inaudible) in the service...I mean, listening to Art (Blakey) and Max (Roach) all the time. I used to come to Brooklyn...I used to come to Brooklyn... See I was driving a

streetcar in Philadelphia...when I got out of the service. Because I was married and I had to get a job. So I was driving a streetcar...and I used to go, ah...Kenny Dennis, Nancy Wilson's ex-husband...is a drummer also. He and I used to leave Philadelphia on the and go over to Monroe Street in Brooklyn to Max Roach's house and spend the weekend...spend two days there. We'd go over there Saturday and be there Sunday and leave Sunday and come back. I used to come back to work. And we would hang out with Max Roach and we would sit up in his room and he would take us through different books. An we would just talk ideas about drums. He was so helpful to me. Max was very helpful to me in those days. See, Max was out there playing. He was one of my idols at that time. And, ah, he and I were good friends...used to come to Philly often. So I got him to..."Say man I want to come over to your house on the weekend." So we did that for quite a few weekends. I learned an awful lot...Max used to tell me (about) some good books to get into. And then I finally found the...

BROWER: What period of time was this? In the forties?

JONES: Uh huh.

BROWER: Mid-forties?

JONES: Forties.

BROWER: Was this when Max had that house...it was sort of like a studio type thing...?

JONES: No, he was home with his mother. He was home with his mother on Monroe Street...before his children, man. Max and I go back...way back to the babies. All of his children...when they were babies. So he was home with mom on Monroe Street in Brooklyn. And we...I wouldn't...not a hundred times, nothing like that. Maybe five or six times we went over there...to help us...me and Kenny. Kenny was a good friend of his also so... And then Kenny Clarke was in New York, you know. I had a lot of beautiful people to meet.

BROWER: Was Kenny Clarke a big influence in your thinking about music...?

JONES: Oh, he was an influence on Max...and Art.

BROWER: So you think of, of...there's a hierarchy that Kenny Clarke is at the apex of it.

JONES: Oh, I figure that Kenny was the, Kenny was the...the orchestrator of the way we play the drums today. Kenny was the first drummer that started breaking rhythms and playing the way that we play when we play with the group. All the drummers used to play different. Then you never had that many drums... Oh, the drums you see...some of these guys have fifteen. But ah, Kenny came along with Baby Dodds and Sid Catlett. Kenny was back then was playing with ah, Fats Waller and in those days. So ah, they were using Indian tom tom and one cymbal and bass drum and snare drum...didn't have all that other stuff. Those were great drummers. I came through just that...I'm glad that God let me pass this way at that time. I ran into Baby Dodds, Sid Catlett and...Denzel Best. Those were the greatest brush players I've ever seen in my life.

BROWER: What were...I mean...

JONES: ...And drummers.

BROWER: What were...for anecdotal sake, what was Baby Dodds and...what was he like?

JONES: Well he was just a...what can I say? He was just a

natural drummer and...a natural person. He was a very beautiful person...happy go lucky. I never heard him say anything funny. I used to go ask him all kind of questions. 'Cause he worked across the street when I was working in 52nd Street in New York...after I went to New York to live. I couldn't stay out of there. I'd go there every minute I get a chance. I get a break, I'd be across the street with him. Because he would be using...the bass drum, snare drum, and one cymbal, Indian tom tom...and swinging. You know, he was phenomenal!

BROWER: What about Sid Catlett?

JONES: Well, he was more phenomenal. He was, like an extension...although Baby might have been older than Sid, I don't know their ages...but they were around the same time. But Sid was more of ah...Sid had a little more fire. Baby was very technical play...(inaudible)...master playing with snare drums and the cymbals. Sid was the master of playing with the brushes. You know... 'cause Dizzy had Sid for a while...making some records with him. Sid was, ah...fast, hands were beautiful. He was a little different.

BROWER: Uh huh, and then...

JONES: He was a little more polished I'd say. A little more polished...

BROWER: And then Kenny comes out of them...

JONES: Well, Kenny was around during that same time. But Kenny had a different direction in mind. His direction was, ah...was fantastic...Sid...and Baby used to love to watch him.

BROWER: Did you get a chance...did you spend a lot of time with Kenny Clarke?

JONES: Ah yeah. I used to live with Kenny.

BROWER: In New York?

JONES: Uh huh.

BROWER: And during that time would it...did you share a lot with him or what?

JONES: Every day we could. Every day we could. We'd play on the practice pads. Practice pads and snare drums... Kenny would say...man...used to call it the "one-eyed monster."

BROWER: (Laughter)

JONES: Practice pads...You see, he didn't like practice pads too

much. So I never used them...didn't get too much help from them.

I used the drums.

BROWER: Spend a lot of time with the snare drum.

JONES: Snare drum or bar stool. I have a bar stool in my house that I use. With a vinyl top on it. I use that.

BROWER: Rather than a practice pad.

JONES: Yeah, because when you use a stick, the stick just drops there. It don't bounce. If it bounces, you made it bounce.

Drop it on a rubber pad it'll say (Jones makes sound of sticks)...it bounce back by itself.

BROWER: So, you get more...you get more...

JONES: What ever the stick does, you have to make it do it.

BROWER: Right.

JONES: If you want it to say (Jones makes percussion sounds)...you got to make it do that. But if you drop it on the bar stool it ain't going to say that. If you drop it on the pad it will do that (Jones makes percussion sounds)...because the rubber makes it bounce. Which I never approved of using...practice pads in my day...during my...when I practice. I

practice on a surface like this (Jones indicates surface)...just like this. You don't get no help from here. Stick just drops there immediately. So if you can roll on this...

BROWER: You can really roll...

JONES: ...You can roll. Not necessarily...I'm still...still after that...that's the hard thing to master...the roll. The best (inaudible) playing mastered rolls are march drummers.

BROWER: Did you have marching experience?

JONES: Ah, yeah.

BROWER: Drum and bugle corp?

JONES: Sure. A lot of the books were in cut time, march time, you know...from which I studied. And I studied with...my formal teacher was a...master percussionist...and ah, Cozy Cole was one of the greatest teachers in life!...to me.

BROWER: Is that who you studied with?

JONES: Yeah, I studied with Cozy about three and a half years.

BROWER: Uh huh. When was that period in your...?

JONES: During the forties, when I moved to New York.

BROWER: Were you about twenty-two twenty-three at that point?

JONES: Uh huh. Yes...

BROWER: And what kind of exercises would you...what would be a typical...what would be a Cozy Cole lesson for you...what would...?

JONES: Go through his books.

BROWER: Go through his books, huh.

JONES: Go through his books and they tell you about your hands and how to use them, how to develop 'em as best you can so you can get some speed, power...and, ah....

BROWER: Uh huh. So it was like exercises...a lot of exercises.

JONES: Well, his exercises... See there are exercises and then there are exercises. See, some of the drum books...the average drum book I look at...because I teach often, when I'm home...and I've had a school in the evening...and I've thought about drummers. And, a lot of 'em...Michael Carvin is one of my ex-students...a whole lot of drummers...Andrew Cyrille is one of my former students. Not...he wasn't there a long time, but he was there. But I (inaudible) line with an awful lot of drummers that are playing professionally today and developing. But you have to

get a good knowledge of the instrument...and your reading ability, your rudamental ability...That's what I went to Cozy for...for rudaments. Because I was playing it, but I didn't know what they were.

BROWER: Right.

JONES: Say if they ask me about a "C" or "D" or "E" with the piano, I knew that from being in...at home all the time when I was a kid. But if you put it on...if you write it out for drums, I didn't know what it would look like. So, Cozy showed me what it looks like and what you're playing and that's what it is. So they make me develop rudiments... Once you get the rudiments in your hands then you can do what you want to do. In other words you have your "bag of tricks"--that's what I call them.

BROWER: Yeah...Well, you...we talked about brushes. We talked about rolls. We talked about things that Cozy Cole, ah...you know the kind of training that you had from him. Were there...would you be interested in showing us some of these things and maybe not (inaudible)...

JONES: I going to do a little (inaudible) brush (inaudible).

It's called, "Brush Artistry." It's in the stores. I'm going to, ah...just do a few things out of the book...a few motions in that are in that book. And then I want to, ah, just play around the set, rudimentally or what ever comes in my mind just to...just to play the drums for a while. And then, ah, I want to do thing I call "Cymbalectomy." It's like the dance on the cymbals. It's nothing but (inaudible) cymbals...what you can do with cymbals...Just some ideas. And ah, it's like something...all of this is coming off the top of my head, now. I don't have anything planned because I never plan. You plan...sometimes plans go awry. I like to just look at the drums and...go play them...

BROWER: Go play them...

JONES: Go play them. See I have a lot...I often hear people say...I was telling a kid yesterday at the concert...His father bought to meet me--a little youngster. He was talk...He loved the drums. That's what he wants to do. So he was saying about...ask me about my snare drum. He was saying, "If I beat it this way..." I said, "Wait a minute now. Look, you want to get

this in your head first. You never "beat" the drum. Don't let anybody...anybody says you beat the drums, you tell them, 'I "play" the drums.' Don't say...you don't beat the drums, you play them. Drum beaters don't ever sound good, so play them. An instrument is to be played, not beat. Nothing likes to be beat." ...A little kid like...

BROWER: Well, that's true. I (inaudible) that really there's a difference. Okay. Can we cut and go do that?

JONES plays the drum set

BROWER: The last segment of the drum solo you just played--after the cymbal portion--seemed to flow out of a creative use of rudiments. Is this...you know, part of what you got out of the Cozy Cole experience, that real...that real strong foundation rudiments allows you to branch off like that?

JONES: Yeah, that Colz's, ah...ideas of how you should be a rudimental drummer...help you in developing your hands. It'll help you in developing your mind too--as long as you know all the rudiments. Like I said earlier, it's like a bag of tricks that you can reach into when you need them. So if it's something I

want to say, I can use the rudiments to say it. It's a lot easier than just...most drummers that don't know anything about rudiments have a hard time saying what they want to say. It's just as conversation. Most of...the great drummers I know are rudimental drummers, you know. All the great ones I know, went through rudiments. And...don't mean that you have to sound like a boy scout when you play it, but it's nice to have the knowledge of them. And you can make them sound...I can make them do anything I want to do. I just felt like working out because my hands felt that way.

BROWER: You say it's early in the day for you.

JONES: Yeah, it is early for me. It's early in the day for me to be playing by myself. See, usually in...early in the day when I'm usually...have to...I have to play early some afternoons. In fact I played a gig in Zurick at eleven o'clock in the morning the gig started. But, ah, when you're playing with other fellows, it comes, ah...it comes around sooner because of the other instruments. But when you're playing by yourself...this reminds me of what I used to do when I was...when I first started

to play drums. I used to get up in the morning and practice like that for about an hour. Then leave it go and come back later and do some more. But I don't do this at all...this time of the day.

BROWER: Yeah. When you first developing as a drummer--that real intense period--how much time were you putting on the instrument?

JONES: Oh, I wouldn't know...I've heard guys say (inaudible)...six or seven hours a day. I've never done that in my life. I practice like, an hour at a time. An hour...I go away and leave the drums alone for a half an hour and come back and do another hour. That's what I'm doing for the day. That's all. Then I come back sometimes and some days I would just practice. One thing that I'm trying to get together...something I can't do. I practice that for maybe forty-five minutes and leave it alone. Go do something else, get it out of your ear and then come back again, do another forty-five minutes. That's my practice for the day. My practice would be not just all around the drums like I was just doing. I would get on one thing. Develop that...clean it up and then get something else. Soon as I clean that up, get another one, clean it up. And then you get

them all together, they're all cleaned up, you can put them together. But just sittin' up there playing all kinds of different things and trying to develop that way, it's hard to keep your mind on everything that you want to do. You got to concentrate on one thing that you're not doing correctly, get that done. Use something else that day...you pick two things a day. But not...not six hours...I don't know what you could play in six hours. I don't what the drummer can be sittin' down talking about he practice for six hours...or four hours! I can't understand that...me, not even two (hours) straight. Sit down, practice for two hours...it don't make sense to me. I'd rather spend the time reading and trying to read some books or something...drum books or something for...an hour or something. Get into that and leave it alone.

BROWER: Uh huh. Well that's all related in a way. That's all part of development...

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JONES: Some teachers will teach you different ways, you know. But all young drummers that are trying to play the drums, they

get involve in it and they feel that they want to play that long.

They think because they are soaking wet, they've done something.

Go on to find out that they didn't do anything.

BROWER: Let's switch gears a little bit. A little bit earlier we were talking about...earlier...the middle forties period. Can you give me...talk about the scene in Philadelphia at that point.

Who were some of the prominent musicians that you were working with (inaudible)?

JONES: It's easy to tell about them. The only that escapes me is the...actual dates and what not. Because, ah...that was a growing up period for me right in there. And just having been released from the army and what not and wanting to do something else and getting married and what not...and being that young and working hard every day. I wanted to go in another direction, because I didn't like hard work. That's the hardest work I like to do. And I wanted to get away from that but I had to work to support my family. But, ah, I used to go the clubs and just listen and sit in. I wasn't...I was still growing. I remember when Jimmy Heath had a big band in the city. Had a very fine

drummer, Specks Wright...Willie Armstrong (inaudible) after he changed his name. They were great drummers, but (inaudible) Harris, like I said taught me most of my...most of my formal training as a youngster. And an old man that used to be in the nightclub across the street from where I lived. I used to watch him through the window. And then on the days of his rehearsals...in the afternoon...I could go in there...it was in the back room. And he'd show me a lot of things. I learned from different drummers and I was...I was...I would ask. Didn't...I was...I never had trouble asking drummers. I do that today. If I see a young drummer doing something...I'm...I wonder what it is, I just ask what is...write it down and then I got it. And I know what it is. Use it...turn it around my way or whatever. But I...met a lot of musicians...coming up in Philadelphia. Jimmy Holiver, Hassan...

BROWER: About...stop for a minute and talk about Hassan. He's a figure...I only know of one record that he did...as a pianist. What...during what period was he active and...?

JONES: He was active when we were...when I was in school. We

used to call him "Count Langford"...because he was looking like Count Basie in those days. His name was William Langford. He became Hassan Ovanali. But ah, he ah...After he accepted Islam he was playing more fluently. In school he was just playing Count Basie's thing. (Inaudible) Then he went into a different...he went to another "door" of piano. And was playing beautiful piano...in those days...then later on the concept of music went into that. But Hassan was doing that years ago.

BROWER: You mean a more dissonant, angular approach?

JONES: Yes...well, you know in an almost avant garde...but correct. See Elmore...Elmore Hope was his, was his biggest influence. But Elmore was, ah...Bud's (Powell) influence...and Monk...Elmore and...Monk and Bud loved Elmore so much, man... Elmore was the real genius of the piano. He was a genius. And Monk loved him. And Bud...because we used to see Bud come in (inaudible) Philly too. And ah...

BROWER: Even though he was from New York, he spent a lot of time in Philadelphia?

JONES: Bud's from Philadelphia.

BROWER: Bud's from Philadelphia.

JONES: Bud Powell's from Philadelphia. He (inaudible)...That's originally. Bud and Richard (Powell). But Elmore...Elmore's West Indian. He come from New York. But...After I finally moved to New York...because I ah...when I left Philadelphia...I left Philadelphia and went to New York...

BROWER: With Elmore?

JONES: With Elmore Hope and Joe Morris and Johnny Griffin and a rhythm and blues band.

BROWER: That was Bull Moose Jackson's Band?

JONES: No, no. This was the ah, Johnny Griffin and ah, Joe Morris Band. Johnny Griffin and Joe Mooris and Mathew Gee and Percy Heath. I played drums. Elmore Hope was the ah, was the ah, pianist. This was an eight piece rhythm and blues band. We had about five or six hits on the juke box at once.

BROWER: Oh yeah? What were some of the peo...what were some of the hits? You remember what they were?

JONES: Oh yeah. We played, ah..."Wow." We played "The Spider." I'm on all them...Atlantic (Records). My discography goes all

the way back there. I made a lot of things..."Wow"...and Joe used to sing. He used to sing...a few tunes...on record. That's what the real days...See that had just left Lionel Hampton's Band. They were in Lionel Hampton's Band. And used to go out... Whenever Lionel would come in town, Hamp used to always say to me, "Come on up and play some, man. Come and play some." And he'd play "Flyin' Home" and all that stuff. I was getting stronger then (inaudible)... I always had a knack to play with a group and...and ah, with a big band, even though I wasn't, ah...wasn't reading big band music. (Inaudible)...Just be being able to play with them. It just...what ever way I felt. As long as you could swing everything was cool. But Joe and Johnny decided to leave Hamp's band and form their own band. So they did so and they got a drummer from Chicago, who got sick and couldn't leave the city. And they came to Philadelphia, and that's when I joined their band...at the Zanzibar in Philadelphia. I sat in with them one night. So they gave me the job and that was a barn storm when I went on the road with them...and that was, ah, the beginning of my road career with

them. That's from Miami to Maine...from New York to California,
from New York to Los Angeles...San Francisco...

BROWER: Everywhere...

JONES: Yeah...on the road...driving. I was doing the driving
and playing the drums.

BROWER: Now you say that Elmore was an influence on Monk and
Bud. Not visa versa.

JONES: Uh huh. They were influence...they influenced each
other, but Elmore had the heaviest...you know...see they
didn't...they really loved each other. I used to go to their
house and watch all three of play the piano, one by one. He
would start a tune and play as much of it as he wanted to and the
next one come right in wherever he leave off. And Bud would play
wherever...I...it was in Bud's house on St. Nicholas. And I used
to sit there for hours during the day and watch them do that,
because we were all friends. Man there were some...I wish to God
I had a tape recorder in those days. That some of the
fabulous...I'm telling you the truth. It's a shame they
weren't...They were using wire recording in those days. They

didn't have no tapes. If you had a cassette in those days, man that would be...wheeee...on my God. It would be worth millions.

BROWER: Another musician that ah, in Philadelphia, that ah, is...whose name comes in reference but it's kind of obscure is Cal Massey.

JONES: Cal was around in those days too.

BROWER: Uh huh.

JONES: Sure. Cal was a...very excellent musician. Used to play trumpet with us all the time when we were on...see when we were growing up and I going around sitting in, we used to have sessions at everybody's house. Next week it would be at my house. This week it be...everybody had a piano in their house. Johnny Coles...it would be at your house next week. At two o'clock the door would start opening...here comes Coltrane. Here comes Jimmy Heath and two or three other drummers....I would be there, saxophone players, and trumpet players. We just have a couple of sets. Everybody would play something. And then we would put the quintet together. We'd play. A couple players got tired and then another trumpet player play. But it was a

□learning□ process. Everybody was learning. There would be four drummers there. I'd play some with these guys and then stop and then another drummer would play. Sometime we wouldn't even stop the music. Just come right on in.

BROWER: Well you know, that...that kind of situation, ah...that's how the music was, ah...was passed down in that time. That doesn't exist much anymore.

JONES: It don't exist today because you've got...you got so many, ah, egotistical musicians before they even get to know their instrument. They're so egotistical and they get such a big head and if they learn how to play two or three notes...and then avant garde opened the door for them--for those who can't play, they can just make a whole lot of noise. They can get away with it...carrying a bag around with them and didn't really study. Some of them were on...they were on the band stands a few years ago...making all that noise 'cause they could get away with it. But it turned around now they can't get away with it and they have to go and study some more. But ah, you see musicians are very funny--some musicians. That is...I don't think they are

musicians because if they were they wouldn't be that funny. They don't want to...they don't want to help nobody with what they're doing. Then they may go faster than they do. Try keep all (inaudible) to themselves, which is a shame it has to be that way. But there are so many other musicians, man...like myself, man, I don't...anything I can help a drummer with, I would try. You know, whatever...if you ask me...it's nothing about saying, "No, I don't want to talk about it," or something like that. I think that's ridiculous. But you got a lot of musicians that do that. Don't want to discuss their instrument at all. And don't have any sessions where you can come and play. And you're playing in a club and somebody can play a little bit...they come to see you and would like to play some..."no we don't allow no sitting in." I think that's ridiculous. Give everybody a little shot somewhere...if it's possible. Some clubs you can't do that. Some clubs you can set aside a session...jam session time.

BOWER: Was...during that time...was Philadelphia different than other cities in that kind of...

JONES: Oh, yeah, yeah. We were...they had so many clubs in

Philly, which it is today, man. We got a lot of clubs. Musicians can play in many, many clubs in Philadelphia. And in Philadelphia you don't hear...see Philadelphia's been that way long as I've known. Every club I go in in Philadelphia, man, they try to...they try to play some modern-progressive-Black music. Good bebop, good contemporary music. Music that people can hum. Music that people can. Music that people can dance by. Music that people can listen to...constructive music. Music that's pleasing to the ear. Then you have the other loud, electronics in some clubs. But the majority of the people in Philadelphia don't cater to that. The only...the people that cater to it are the young ignorant children that haven't heard any music at all. And all they want to do is hear some blaring...put earphones on and ruin their ear drums and what not. They don't teach it in schools.

BROWER: Did you, ah...an important musical relationship in your life was the one with Tadd Dameron. Did you meet him in Philadelphia? How did that...how did (inaudible)...?

JONES: Well, I met Tadd in Philly the same way. I was in

Philadelphia and Art Blakey didn't...didn't get to a job and I, ah...they ask me to make it...'cause I was right there next door. And, ah, the guys in New York had been hearing about me in Philadelphia. Everytime they come in, they knew. A lot of them used to tell me, say, "Man, you should be living in New York, man." I say, "Yeah, when I feel like I'm ready, I'll move." You know. So I worked with Tadd's band there, with Dexter (Gordan), Freddie Webster, and what not. Tadd and I became good friends. And I didn't see him again until later on in New York. After I finally moved to New York...well I saw him again, but in and out of town. But then we became great friends...

BROWER: In New York...

JONES: When I was with him with Bull Moose Jackson. He was the band director. And all the time...everytime he wanted to do records with him, he just made sure that I would be the drummer.

BROWER: Did you actually work (inaudible) or (inaudible) pick pieces of music with him?

JONES: Huh?

BROWER: Did you and he develop pieces, some of his pieces...?

JONES: Oh, we did a lot of collaboration on a lot of tunes.
'Cause when...when I went to live with him, I was with him constantly, all the time. And ah...he'd call me to the piano and say, "How do you like this, Joe?" I'd say, "Yeah, man!" And he would get to a spot and say, "Wonder what I should put in there? Got any suggestion?" It would be a thing like that.

BROWER: Would you mind, at this point...I don't think people know that...a lot of people don't know that you do play some piano...

JONES: A little bit. Very little.

BROWER: A little bit. Very little, okay...

JONES: Very little, because I...It's just something that I love. And I've been studying and...now more so than ever, trying to develop a...See, I like to use it for writing. I get...Tadd to show me how to make a chord and...what horn to give a note if you want to voice it. I've written a few things for the band and what not. But that instrument you have to play fluently...to play. I can play some...some compositions...compositions and things like that. But to really play with a group or a band and

do all the heavy solos, you have to work with it like you work with any other instrument. I don't have the time to do that. The only thing I have the time to do with that instrument is to learn how to play pretty chords best I can...and some melodies or whatever. At least the knowledge of the piano, you know, I have. But you have to...

BROWER: Would you mind sitting at the piano for a minute?

JONES: No, I was...yeah I'll play...a composition I wrote for my wife. I just wrote it. I call it "Weezie." Her name is Ellouise and I call it "Weezie." And I was going to, ah...it's an impromptu thing. Goes into a little tempo...it's in and out of tempo. I think it sets better. But when I do it for the band...when I write it out for the band, it'll have to be a slow tempo...a little more than the ballad.

BROWER: Okay.

JONES plays the piano

BROWER: You played...you say that's a little bit more than a ballad. You like to slow it down, you know, to ballad type tempo.

JONES: Yeah. Put it in a little semi-sweet...(inaudible) or something. When I finally decide to do it, I may put it in, ah...different moods--three moods.

BROWER: Tadd...You know, going back to Tadd Dameron for a minute. Ah, what is your feeling about his importance, ah...you know, we hear the names: Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, you know, Max Roach, Kenny Clarke in terms of the bebop...the heirarchy bebop. (Inaudible) in that (inaudible). Where do you think Tadd fits in there, especially with other composers arrangers...

JONES: He was the forerunner of all that bebop, man. Tadd is the originator of writing...all those hip tunes that he did for Dizzy's band..."The Squirrel," "Hot House"... Oh, Tadd's got so many..."Stay On It,"...my God!..."If You Could See Me Now"... "Our Delight," "Sid's Delight," "Tadd's Delight." Tadd was writing all those things...all of the musicians in my time grew up. We grew up on his music. Grew up on his figures. See in other words he would write the tune with the chords and the melody... He would take a tune like Charlie Parker would do...Would pick a

tune like, ah, "Out of Nowhere" and write a bebop figure to it. Tadd would be writing things like that and he was saturating the market with it because it came off the top of his head...of his head. And was beautiful...the tunes that he composed. And all the musicians...if you didn't know those tunes, man you would be obsolete. You couldn't go nowhere and play with the fellows. Because they would be playing...they would call a tune and play the bebop figures on 'em, which became, ah, hit records...a lot of those things were. Tadd was a heavy influence on all the writers that...Quincy (Jones), man, he come up under...listening to Tadd. All the great writer today...you can very rarely find a writer...and you don't hear him touch on Tadd's voicings or the way he used to put a band together. That's why he can...Tadd can make nine pieces sound like twenty. The way he would put it on...orchestrate. You know...He's done a lot of symphonic things. Tadd was a genius...was a genius. He used to love to play with us too sometime. He was a good comp...he could comp good. He used to play funny solos. His solos used to be tricky and funny but he used to play... All of the fellows love

him...comping...because he give you the right...he'd lay the comping down right.

BROWER: (Inaudible)

JONES: Oh yeah. Tadd was the greatest composer that I've ever heard...and orchestrator... I hear a lot of great composers today and coming up during his time, but they couldn't touch him as far as I'm concerned. He could never get the recognition he was supposed to have gotten...for his contribution. He contributed more to this form of music than anybody I know...any composer out there. There's not one out there that contributed that much to this music.

BROWER: Uh huh. And you're saying that...with respect to Ellington, Monk...?

JONES: Well, Duke's...see, Duke's music wasn't the kind of...Duke's contribution could never be surpassed. But his music was different than Tadd's music. See, Duke loved what Tadd came up with...see Duke came along before Tadd. Tadd is an extension from Duke Ellington, only he changed...just like when Dizzy was in Cab Calloway's band. Cab Calloway fired him because he was

playing too much trumpet. He thought he was playing nothing...Cab thought he was playing nothing, but Dizzy was playing...a new constructive way of playing the horn. Guys were playing...trumpet players started...they used to think...when Louis Armstrong would hit that "C" above the staff, that was high "C". That ain't no high "C", man, they are playing altissimo "C". So Louis used to work up to that. Hit that "C" (inaudible) above the staff (inaudible) up there...trumpet players today. Hit 'em on the head..."G's" and "E's"... Louis never played no "G's" and "E's" in his day. Way up there...for what reason?...Cat Anderson...in Duke's band...came later. Everything changes. The horns started changing. All the old timers...didn't like bebop because they couldn't play it. "Ah, that ain't nothing. That's noise." That's never been noise, man. It's going to the places where you dare...where they dare not go. They say, "Ah, no man, you can't play that flatted fifth." What do you mean you can't play a flatted fifth! Flatted fifth's a pretty chord. When you want it flatted...you do something to the chord out of the ordinary...one, three, five, whatever that is that they do...that

they been doing with the chords...church chords...and if you dress it up, then you're wrong. But that's not true. Today all the chords are dressed up beautiful. You write dissonances and things today, you know. You deliberately put two notes together...like a "C" and a "D" in a chord. You deliberately do that...whereas...You don't do that. You can't put those two together. What you do, if you listen to...according to what you have in the root and what you put on the top...if you got those two notes in the middle. They sound beautiful. It's a dissonance but it's...it's for the ear. The great symphonic composers...a lot of don't that they wouldn't do...If they heard some of the music that we hear today they probably commit suicide. And I mean...what they would consider wrong. I often have said this during different interviews. I believe Beethoven and Mozart...as far as listening to some of Art Tatum, I think they might have committed suicide. If they heard a pianist like Art Tatum, I think they might have...either marveled at him or decided to jump off the bridge or something...seeing somebody playing the piano like that and playing it with so much

cleanliness and so much accuracy and so much speed and so much
knowledge of music. You mention Art Tatum today to our children,
they don't know anything about Art Tatum. The greatest player to
me and to many many millions of people. Art Tatum is...wheeew!
Billy Taylor, Oscar Peterson...they'll tell you about Art Tatum.
They knew him. I worked with him. I knew...every night.

BROWER: Did you work with Art Tatum?

□Disk #1 full□

□□□

on 40

PHILLY JOE JONES INTERVIEW
(Con't)
DISK #2

Begin Disk #2
Con't Tape #1, side B

JONES: Unbelievable! Huh?

BROWER: When did you work with Art Tatum?

JONES: I worked with Art Tatum and, ah, Ben

Webster...trio...everynight. In New York when I was working in

Birdland in the fifties. Sure, I used to finish Birdland and get

in a cab and dash uptown to my after hour gig. Nobody but

Art and Ben...that's all. Snare drum, bass drum and one cymbal

and brushes...no sticks. After hour place...St Nicholas.

Beautiful...everynight. Can you imagine what that is?...with

the genius? Two genius! Ben Webster's a genius. I came here

to Washington with Ben. Two or three years straight when we

worked together...when I worked with Ben.

BROWER: Where did you work here with him?

JONES: We worked here at the Bengazi. We worked around the corner in a couple of clubs there. We worked at Olivia Davis' club here. I been here with Ben many many times. Miles too.

BROWER: I'm glad you did that because it would be...I would probably be assassinated by someone if we went through this interview and we didn't talk about your relationship with Miles Davis.

JONES: My relationship with Miles is such a...we could go volumes on that. But that's a...you know...that would take me ten years to sit here and talk about him because it never ends. Our relationship is still cool.

BROWER: Let's talk about it for about five minutes.

JONES: Well, you know, I didn't...Miles is...you know...really Miles is a very strange person. And when I say strange person, as far as, ah...he's strange when people talk about him. You know... But with me I know...if he reads anything I say he'll just laugh and say, "Well..." He know's I...you know... But

people used to say things about him that they don't really know.

It's heresay...it's heresay and they shouldn't say...you know,

shouldn't say anything like that. They should say...

BROWER: Well, what I'm interested in, like we were talking before about how the band got together.

JONES: Oh, when the band...you know, I just... See I knew Miles when I met Tadd. I knew Miles before Tadd...coming in town and, ah... We got together in Philadelphia in the club. We got together (inaudible) in the club and, ah... He was doing a single and I was...I had the house trio. He came in and worked a couple weeks...fell in love with me and I fell in love with him.

Begin Tape #2 - Side A
Con't. Disk #2

JONES: I said..., "We should be playing together" or something. I wanted to play with him anyway, man. He came back again and... so he finally said, "Man why don't you come and go out with me for a while where I can play some." I said, "Alright." When I

went with him it was just a duo. Just he and I...on the road.

I'd get in different towns and try to get a piano player, bass

player and finally get a saxophone player. But he did a

quartet for a long time. We were working here with a quartet.

And he used to talk about saxophone players...

BROWER: You were talking about, ah...

JONES: Forming the band.

BROWER: Forming the band and Ray Bryant...

JONES: Ray Bryant...Ray Bryant was the first pianist in, ah...I

forget the, ah...bassist...as well as I know him too...it's hard

to... Well anyway...But I just thought that Ray was, ah...a

little bit too much ah...He had more church in him than he Bud

Powell in him. Ray grew up in the church. Which...Ray is a fine

pianist, excellent pianist. But his comp feeling was not...was

more in the gospel thing. He used to play for the church all the

time when he was a kid when we were all growing up, you know.

His parents had church. So Miles said he wanted something different. So I said, "Red is Bud Powell around here. He plays Bud's stuff. So he got Red (Garland) to come in. And we still had the bass player there. And got John Coltrane to come in with us. So the first night we started playing, I said, "Man this sounds...Now we're beginning to sound..." Miles loved Trane. He loved Red so he was happy. So he said he had a bass player in New York which was Paul. I didn't know Paul. I had never met Paul. But Miles had so he sent for him and started the... Soon as we played the first night, Miles went out and bought uniforms for us.

BROWER: When he knew the personnel he wanted, that was it.

JONES: He didn't know the personnel he wanted. He just knew...he knew he wanted Paul, but he knew he didn't want what he was playing with. So he was asking, ah...He knew about Trane. Trane had been with Dizzy. Had been out there with Eddie

"Cleanhead" Vinson. Trane had been out with a whole lot of people. Miles had heard him, but he never knew that the saxophone player that he was looking for would be Trane. And I'm the one that said, "Man, why don't you try...you and him would be...You're looking for that marriage. You're looking for that marriage between horns. It's a marriage, man." But he was lucky he got a marriage between horns and rhythm section. Musical telepathy. That's one of the greatest things you can have when five men can play together and don't have to rehearse. We never rehearsed. We never rehearsed no music, man. Mile said he was too lazy to rehearse...Me too. He'd say, "Man, let's play it tonight...play it like that tomorrow." He always used to say that. I said, "What?" He said, "Yeah man. Remember what you played. You remember the tempo, you the drummer." And the next night we played the beginning like we did and the ending like we did. But inside we never know what's going to happen in there. Every night it's different. But that made it so beautiful, man.

Make the music so beautiful. Everything was spontaneous...we know how we going to leave and we know how we going to start. And we know how fast we going to go and we know how slow we going to go. So you can get as pretty as you want to inside. Do what you want to do. What ever you feel like. When it comes to you, just turn around..."you got it." I learned so much. I learned an awful lot there, man.

BROWER: In that band.

JONES: Oh, man...wheew!...sure. Everybody there had something to say...something to say...Suggestions...you never had nobody getting drug with what you play. We had a lot of fun, man. That was a fun, fun...happiness. I wish I could get that again in this life before I leave here. That complete feeling with...everybody on the bandstand...I almost get it with my own group. I get it anyway because everybody in my band is cool.

BROWER: Uh huh. You mean Dameronia?

JONES: Oh yeah. Everybody in Dameronia is cool. They are good people. I get...I almost get that feeling, but it's hard to get the telepathy with eight other people. Because you don't...unless you play together every night...week after week after week. See, I haven't gotten that much exposure although we've been together over three years. It's just the promoters and what not just seem to lean toward other groups and tell me that they can't afford it and all that. But I said if you can afford a nineteen piece band, seventeen piece band...take 'em all out on festivals and what not. But when it comes to a small nine piece band, it makes me feel as though they want to try to keep Tadd's music hidden. See, the music I've playing of Tadd's, we've got about twelve or fifteen more arrangements that we haven't even played. We've done two...Grammy nominated albums and I been saving the meat and the meat is all the way down the line. We can do two more albums, man, of Tadd's music. Tadd

would...there's no end to it. He wrote so much...wrote so much.

There are so many more...so many more compositions that he had

that he was doing before...at the time he died, which I haven't

even touched on them yet. His wife has them. They're for me.

She's in London. She said, "All this is yours. He would want

you to have it." I have permission to use his name and what

not...Dameronia. She and I, of course, we were friends when he

was alive. We were with him, you know, several times...I was

with him during two of his heart attacks. On his third, I was in

Japan. He was so sick, I thought maybe I might have been with

him on that third one. I was with him on two. I remember where

he kept his nitroglycerin pills. I had to get on him. Get on

him. Give to him. (Inaudible) I know what's was happening.

(Inaudible) I was living with him. See him go like that

(inaudible) have no heart attack but I know how to do it. I

know what to do for him...with the chest...the head and then

mouth. I put the pillow...and everything, man. And get him to

the hospital. He had one at Miles' house. One in the house we lived in. One in Miles' house. And then the next one that he had, I was in Japan in March of '65 when it happened. But, I'm going to keep him alive as long as I can. Keep him alive with in the people's ears...

BROWER: Well, you put some of it in the people's ears this weekend at, ah, when you performed at the Dameronia Concert at the Capital City Jazz Festival.

JONES: Yes. I'd like to come back again sometime and...and really have some more of the beautiful things that he's composed and arranged and let the people hear some more. Because he has some spectacular music.

End of Interview